

Today's Lecture

1/21/09

- Rhetoric v. Logic
- Well-crafted Arguments
- Strategies for Crafting Arguments

Rhetoric

Rhetoric is the study of how to persuade an audience to believe something or do something.

Just a few rhetorical virtues for speakers/writers:

- being friendly
- being confident
- being assuring
- being humorous
- knowledge of the target audience psychology



Logic

- **Logic** (recall) is the study of the methods for evaluating inferential support between an argument's premises and its conclusion.
- If a person presents an argument, it does not matter whether they are mean, humorless, or smelly, and it doesn't matter whether it is delivered in a soothing tone. And so on.
- As far as logic goes, these things (among others) are all irrelevant.



Unfortunately for the logician (me&you), many real world arguments are a tangled mess of logical and rhetorical elements.

Fortunately, we have pretty good methods for extracting the logical elements .

Our Goal

We want to know how to
sort through an
argumentative passage
and extract a well-
crafted version of the
argument.

A **well-crafted** (version of an) argument is an argument that is stated in such a way that its important logical features are explicit.

Principle One:

Identify Conclusion and Premises

Conclusion indicators

so thus
therefore consequently
hence which proves that
implies that we may infer that

- **Therefore**, there is methane on Mars.
- **Consequently**, some light fixtures are dangerous.
- **We may infer**, then, that consciousness is not

Premise indicators

.
because after all
since the reason is that
for based on the fact that
as

- **After all**, infants acquire their linguistic competence very early on.
- Frank should enter the computer generated reality, **as** his life is full of misery and woe.

Convert conditional sentences into standard if-then form

These:

- Obama is now president only if GW Bush is no longer president.
- Given that Obama is now president, GW Bush is no longer president.
- GW Bush is no longer president if Obama is now president

should all be represented as:

(*) If Obama is now president, then GW Bush is no longer president.

rhetical questions

These (can) serve as disguised statements.

Consider:

Freudian psychology is dubious as a general theory of human personality. Do you really think all of one's problems are traceable to childhood? Must everybody be pitted against their parents?

A well-crafted version:

1. Not all of one's problems are traceable to childhood.
2. Not everybody is pitted against their parents.
3. So, Freudian psychology is dubious as a general theory of human personality.

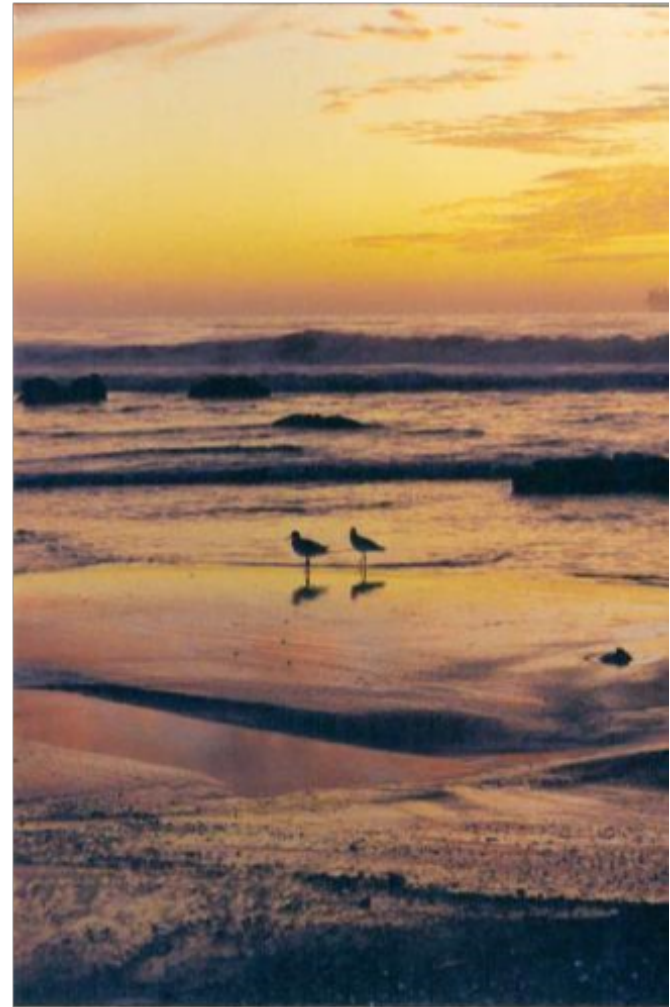
commands

Some commands are best treated as “ought” statements, e.g.

Go to the beach today! You do not have any work and it’s a beautiful day. I’ll meet you there.

A well-crafted version:

1. You do not have any work.
2. It’s a beautiful day.
3. So, you ought to go to the beach today.



Principle Two:

Eliminate Excess Verbiage



DISCOUNTS

A discount =df an acknowledgement of something that might render the argument invalid, weak, unsound, or uncogent.

Consider:

Though I support the freedom of speech, calling in a fake bomb threat to a crowded location is impermissible. And since that was a free act of speech, not all free acts of speech are permissible.

REPETITION

Carefully omit sentences that are repetitive

or say the same thing

or they are redundant

...

ASSURANCES

An assurance=df an expression that indicates confidence.

Consider:

We **obviously** do not live on a flat earth.
So the flat-earth society is fundamentally mistaken.

Well-crafted:

1. We do not live on a flat earth.
2. So, the flat-earth society is fundamentally mistaken.

HEDGES

A hedge =df an expression that indicates the arguer is tentative.

Some common hedges:

- It seems to me that
- In my opinion
- I just feel that

Principle Three:

Employ Uniform Language



1. God is love.
 2. Love is blind.
 3. Ray Charles is blind.
-
1. Thus, God is Ray Charles.

Example from pg 79

If you study other cultures then you realize what a variety of human customs there is. If you understand the diversity of social practices, then you question your own customs. If you acquire doubts about the way you do things, then you become more tolerant. Thus, if you expand your knowledge of anthropology, then you become more likely to accept other people and practices without criticism.

Example from pg 79

1. If you study other cultures then you realize what a variety of human customs there is.
2. If you understand the diversity of social practices, then you question your own customs.
3. If you acquire doubts about the way you do things, then you become more tolerant.
4. Thus, if you expand your knowledge of anthropology, then you become more likely to accept other people and practices without criticism.

Well-Crafted:

1. If you study other cultures then you realize what a variety of human customs there is.
2. If you realize what a variety of human customs there is, then you question your own customs.
3. If you question your own customs, then you become more tolerant.
4. Thus, if you study other cultures, then you become more tolerant.

Principle Four:

Be fair and charitable in interpreting an argument



I said 'I thought your yacht was larger than it is'; ... the owner replied, 'No, my yacht is not larger than it is'.

- Bertrand Russell

Fairness

A **fair** reconstruction will be loyal to the author's original meaning.

Consider an argument:

1. Morality is objective only if God exists.
2. Morality is objective.
3. So, God exists.

Now consider this unfair rendition:

1. If Morality is objective then an invisible space ghost exists.
2. Morality is objective.
3. So, an invisible space ghost exists.

Charity

The basic idea: when confronted with an interpretative choice, it is best to pick the interpretation that best preserves the rationality of the author.

example (pg 80):

Oh, yes, we are all deeply appreciative of the full and accurate information from our government during the Vietnam War. So, how can anyone doubt that we received full and accurate information during the war in the Persian Gulf?

well-crafted:

1. Americans did not receive accurate information from their government during the Vietnam War.
2. So, Americans probably did not receive accurate information from their government during the war in the Persian Gulf.

Principle Five:

Do not confuse subconclusions with final conclusions

Principle Six:

Make implicit premises explicit